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ABSTRACT:

Elements of a successful proposal for the Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad Program are identified, based on a 1981 experience in Hong Kong and Taiwan, as well as a 1983 Peru trip. A successful proposal and application should cover: assessing the institution, institutional involvement in identifying world areas, research on previous programs, host country arrangements, evaluation of the program, selection of the faculty, faculty orientation, debriefing sessions upon return to the United States, and the qualifications of the project director. During the grants competition, the following criteria are used by judges: the soundness of the plan, host country arrangements, budgetary considerations, evaluation provisions, and the selection process. Issues that should be considered include: whether there is a sound international curriculum and area studies component at the institution; whether arrangements with the host institution are made in advance; and the staff members' experience in group travel abroad and their knowledge of the language and culture of the host country. The consortial approach, which might involve several institutions and their staff, is also an option for the project. (SW)

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FULBRIGHT-HAYS GROUP PROJECTS ABROAD: PREPARING SUCCESSFUL PROPOSALS AND THE EVALUATION PROCESS OF APPLICATIONS

This past summer I served as the Project Director of a Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad Program to Peru. This project involved 16 faculty members from three separate member institutions of the Northwest International Education Association. The faculty evaluated this program as extremely successful. Faculty comments were as follows:

> "This project was carefully thought out and implemented. It gave me an experience that I will forever cherish in my classroom and throughout my life. Latin America needs to be better understood by North Americans and programs such as these allow us as scholars and teachers to be able to be better prepared to write and teach about international studies, especially including a heterogeneous society such as Peru, which reflects many of the problems of the underdeveloped world."

> "The project was well planned, intensive, demanding of time, skill, intellect and it developed an awareness that could not be experienced unless one visited the country in the manner in which we were given the opportunity. This experience has helped reinforce the ideas that we have of other cultures, their problems, their joys and fears, trust and distrust, gladness and pain. This project increased my professional confidence and competence in developing further an ability to function in a totally different culture."

I utilize these quotations in order to emphasize the point that when a group projects abroad experience is well planned and organized prior to departure, during the trip and upon return to the United States, the faculty who share this experience, receive the full benefit of the program.

How does an institution and the project director guarantee a

successful experience and in turn a successful proposal? In my experience as project director for two Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad, one implemented in the Summer of 1981 to Hong Kong and Taiwan as well as the previously mentioned Peru trip in the Summer of 1983, I believe that a successful program and thus a successful application must include the following components:

1. Assessing an Institution. The questions which need to be raised in this context are: Is there a sound international curriculum already in place at the institution? Are there area studies in the curriculum? Would an experience abroad strengthen what already exists in the institution? If so, what departments and/or faculty would benefit the most from such an experience? Are these faculty members willing to travel abroad in order to return to their campuses to add to what they have been teaching in their courses? If all of these components are in place, then certainly a group projects abroad could strengthen what exists on the campus.

2. Institutional Involvement in Identifying World Areas. The director of international studies should then meet with the faculty in order to decide which area of the world would strengthen the existing international education commitments of the institution.

3. Research on Previous Programs. Once an area of the world has been identified, careful research should be undertaken to assess what similar experiences in that part of the world other institutions throughout the United States may have had. This will give the applicant an overall picture of the positive and negative experiences by other institutions, contacts with institutions abroad, names of persons who could facilitate the program in the host country and background information which could assist the institution in assessing the arrangements which need to take place.

4. Host Country Arrangements. Preferably, if the institution has the funds, the project director of the proposal should travel to the host institution in order to plan the

proposal so that it will receive the necessary documentation assuring a commitment on the part of the host country. If, however, an institution cannot send a person abroad, then letters or phone calls to the host country must be arranged several months prior to submitting the proposal. This will give the host country the opportunity to review the proposal and respond. This procedure is essential for, if an application does not have the proper endorsements and approval from the host country, the project is next to impossible to implement. Once the host country has agreed to work with an institution, specific daily agendas must be submitted to them so that they understand what it is the faculty wish to do abroad, e.g., what lectures do they wish, what type of research projects will the faculty undertake, what contacts must be made for the faculty, etc. Ideally, a host country director will be assigned to this program so that he/she can be involved in each step of the process.

5. Evaluation of the Program. Evaluation procedures for the program must be planned carefully. The evaluations should reflect each objective of the program. In my programs I have utilized daily evaluations on each activity, a host country evaluation, the project director's evaluation and at the end of the trip, an overall evaluation.

6. Selection of the Faculty. Faculty must be carefully chosen on the basis of their ability to travel successfully with a group; for their research projects which they will be implementing; for their previous overseas experiences; and for their language expertise. This is a critical part of the process. Faculty must understand that travel in developing nations is often difficult, that a team effort needs to take place, that the trip is demanding and that flexibility on their part is essential. It is also essential that the faculty be fully committed to this experience, and that upon return to the U.S. they implement their experiences in the classroom, their com-

munities and possibly work with secondary school teachers to assist them in internationalizing their courses.

7. Faculty Orientation. Pre-departure orientation for the faculty must be carefully planned. The orientation process should begin, if possible, several months prior to departure. It has been my experience that a formal. intensive orientation of 2 weeks just prior to departure is most effective. This orientation must be a requirement for all participants.

8. Debriefing Sessions Upon Return to the United States. Faculty welcome the opportunity, upon return, to reflect on their experiences and the research they have done. Often, I have found that several meetings throughout the year are an important component to the debriefing process.

9. Project Director. Last, but certainly one of the most important keys to the success of the project, is the director. His/her experience in group travel abroad and knowledge of the language and culture of the country where the trip is to take place, is essential. Needless to say, if the project director is aware of the country and culture, there is immediate entré to the country and to assuring the success of the program. Furthermore, sensitivity to a group experience abroad is of the utmost value to the effectiveness of the program. The director must be able to recognize quickly and deal with such problems as culture shock, regression, disorientation, loss of identity and the general inability of some people to deal with experiences which are not familiar to them. This is not to say that all or any of these occur abroad, but the project director should be aware of the possibility they may arise so that he/she will be better equipped to deal with them.

The above categories reflect proposals which are institutionally based, there are several other approaches to this grant such as college and universities applying to raise the consciousness of cur-

riculum in the primary and secondary levels of education. Thus teachers are often carefully chosen to travel abroad in order to enhance their experiences and, as a result of this travel they will better prepare students for an interdependent world.

Another type of proposal is the consortial approach. Consortial proposals should reflect a similar process as the institutional proposals; however, it is even more essential that careful thought be given to coordination of the institutions and faculty. Institutions should be carefully chosen for their economic commitment and their willingmess to implement this experience on the campus. Regional proximity which can tie institutions together is important since the relevance of faculty travel abroad involves a closely monitored experience of the faculty prior to and following the trip. The proximity guarantees several meetings prior to departure and several upon return. Furthermore, a core of faculty members from one institution is essential in reinforcing an institutional commitment. I have found that a workable plan for consortial grants might include three institutions and five faculty members from each participating institution. An experience abroad is difficult at best and faculty rapport and cohesion must be assured at each stage of the experience.

The areas mentioned earlier in submitting a successful application become evident during the competition. Grants which have been carefully implemented are judged by the following criteria:

1. Is the overall plan sound? That is, will it benefit the institution and the faculty involved? Specifically, what are the future objectives of the plan for the institution? How will an institution or institutions most effectively incorporate this experience? Will curriculum be enhanced or changed as a result of the trip?

2. Host country arrangements. Arrangements with the host country and institution must be already completed by the time the proposal reaches the competition. In this context, I recall an excellent program in one application that stated that upon receiving the funds they will check with the country for which they were proposing to travel. My evaluation comments to this institution were that, un-

less they have checked with the host country, they cannot guarantee the trip might even be possible. Thus, I did not recommend the proposal for funding.

3. Budgetary considerations. The budget should reflect the needs of faculty during their stay abroad while at the same time it must be drafted realistically to meet the costs of the country where the faculty will be travelling. Since this grant pays only for activities abroad, the institution must be prepared to pay for the orientation, debriefings and the curriculum implementation upon return to the U.S. If an institution is willing to commit the up-front costs of this program, they will, more than likely, commit to the educational growth of their faculty and curriculum.

4. Evaluation. Evaluation of the program is essential. How will the program be evaluated throughout each step is a question that must carefully relate to the objectives of the proposal.

5. Selection Process. The qualifications of the project director are carefully scrutinized and the selection process of faculty travelling abroad is important. Applicants should have a working knowledge of the language and culture of the country as well as a commitment to the program as a whole. As a reader, I carefully weigh the involvement of the faculty, administration and program director for several months prior to the actual trip.

The Group Projects Abroad offer to partcipants, experiences which are crossroads in the lives of people and faculty and must be given all the serious consideration they deserve. We must be aware that, as quoted at the beginning of this paper, "These projects give faculty an experience that they will forever cherish in their classroom and throughout their lives."

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